UNITED
NATIONS

ST

Secretariat

ST/AI/386
23 August 1993

ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUCTION

To: Members of the Staff

From: The Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management

Subject: ELECTRONIC MAIL POLICIES AND STANDARDS

I. POLICIES

1. Effective immediately, the following policies will apply to the provision of electronic mail (e-mail) for the United Nations at all duty stations, in accordance with administrative instruction ST/AI/347 of 9 March 1988 on office automation standardization:

(a) One single electronic mail product, i.e., "cc:Mail", will be used as the standard for the Organization;

(b) All other e-mail packages at present in use will be phased out by the end of the biennium 1994-1995;

(c) An organizational e-mail directory (based on cc:Mail users) will be implemented from local directories maintained at each duty station;

(d) Connections to each office away from Headquarters will be direct cc:Mail to cc:Mail using the United Nations own telecommunications network;

(e) Connections to other United Nations agencies, and to organizations outside the United Nations, will be provided from cc:Mail gateways to the Internet and through X.400 services as appropriate.

II. SELECTION OF A STANDARD PRODUCT

2. The selection of cc:Mail is based on the conclusion that this software would best serve the Organization's needs for electronic mail for users who are connected to the Local Area Network (LAN) at each United Nations duty station. The product is marketed by the Lotus Development Corporation.

3. The decision to adopt cc:Mail is the result of an in-depth comparative study by a technical panel consisting of representatives of departments and offices. The recommendation of the technical panel has been reviewed and approved by the Working Group of the Technological Innovations Board.

4. The selected product, cc:Mail, is considered to be superior in the following aspects:

(a) It is user-friendly and intuitive;

(b) Administration of the system can be done centrally;

(c) Full directory synchronization is supported for all network nodes;

(d) Both DOS and Windows versions are available;

(e) It runs on the two network operating systems (Banyan VINES and Novell Netware) at present in use;

(f) Linkage with other e-mail systems is provided through Internet and X.400 gateways;

(g) Special pricing agreements can be obtained for the product;

(h) Technical support for the product is excellent.

III. IMPLEMENTATION

5. As a result of the selection of cc:Mail as the organizational standard, there will be a gradual phase-out of all other e-mail products now in use by staff at all United Nations duty stations. This is expected to be completed before the end of the biennium 1994-1995. Work is already under way to install cc:Mail at most duty stations, and to link the e-mail facility at each office with the central cc:Mail post office at Headquarters.

6. Non-standard e-mail products may need to continue to be supported until such time as personal computer users can be connected to the LAN. In order to connect users of non-standard e-mail products to the global cc:Mail network, non-standard products should be connected directly to a local cc:Mail node. The Electronic Services Division, Office of General Services, Department of Administration and Management, can advise local support personnel regarding products which allow for this linkage.

7. In order to be registered as a cc:Mail participant, a staff member's personal computer must be connected to the LAN at the local duty station. The LAN administrator can then be requested to allow access to the e-mail service, and to put the new e-mail recipient into the local directory. Local directories are automatically synchronized to provide a global directory of all e-mail users. A copy of the global cc:Mail directory is available at each duty station, and any registered e-mail user can send and receive mail to and from any registered user world wide.

8. At certain duty stations, training in cc:Mail is already available for LAN administrators who will assist their work groups in the use of cc:Mail. If new cc:Mail users are now using a different e-mail program (such as Wang Office or Office Vision), they will be retrained to use the cc:Mail product.

A. Exchanging mail with individuals outside the United Nations

9. When fully implemented, the e-mail network for the United Nations will allow cc:Mail users to exchange mail with registered e-mail subscribers in other United Nations agencies, as well as with people who have e-mail addresses in other organizations. It is likely that an inter-agency e-mail directory will be available to United Nations e-mail users in the future. It is now possible, however, to exchange mail with individuals in other agencies provided the e-mail address of that person is known. Additional information regarding procedures for e-mail to other United Nations agencies will be provided in subsequent administrative issuances.

10. Gateway services from cc:Mail allow users to exchange e-mail with individuals outside the United Nations who have Internet and X.400 addresses. Gateways to Internet and X.400 are now available from the central cc:Mail post office at Headquarters, as well as at certain other offices. Staff who now have cc:Mail addresses, and whose work requires that they use Internet or X.400 e-mail, may request an Internet or X.400 address. At Headquarters, these addresses are assigned by the Electronic Services Division; at other duty stations, the equivalent office will assign the addresses. The Electronic Services Division is also prepared to supply Internet/X.400 addresses to cc:Mail users at offices away from Headquarters in cases where no local gateway services are available.

11. Both fax and telex gateways will also be added to cc:Mail in the future. This feature will allow PC users to send fax and telex messages from cc:Mail. Future plans include delivery of both fax and telex traffic to a user's electronic mailbox.

B. Use and limitations of e-mail for office correspondence

12. The basic unit of an electronic mail transaction is the message. A message can vary in length from one-line to several pages. A message can be accompanied by an attachment. The attachment can be any file which can reside in the PC environment, such as a WordPerfect document, a Lotus spreadsheet, or a database file. Information in image format can also be exchanged as an attachment.

13. Although cc:Mail provides for separate log in and password access for each user, the e-mail network cannot be regarded as being fully secure, and should not be used to send confidential or sensitive information. Considerable discretion is therefore required in the use of e-mail and proper supervisory controls should be established. In composing messages, care should be taken to observe the same conventions and courtesies as are used in other types of exchanges between offices.

14. Pending further study of the use of e-mail for official correspondence, the more traditional forms of communication (memoranda and letters) for exchange of information which is vital to an office should continue to be used. In cases where it would be advantageous for two offices to communicate directly using e-mail to replace their official correspondence, an arrangement to this effect should be agreed upon by the heads of the offices, bearing in mind the limitations of electronic mail as a medium.

15. Additional information regarding the implementation of the global e-mail network, as well as specific plans for Headquarters implementation, should be addressed to the Chief of the Infrastructure and Application Support Section of the Electronic Services Division. E-mail queries at offices away from Headquarters should be directed to local computer support staff, who are requested to coordinate their work on e-mail issues with the Electronic Services Division.